

Michigan Townships Association

Core Competencies

For Elected Township Officials

Core Competencies: The Building Blocks of Township Government

What do you need to know to be an effective township official? Consider this booklet your guide.

To ensure that all township officials have the opportunity to learn what they need to know to carry out their statutory duties as well as understand effective township management practices, the Michigan Townships Association has identified “core competencies.” Essentially, they are the “nuts and bolts” that each of the four elected offices at the township level should know and/or be skilled in to successfully perform their duties.

The “checklists” in this booklet should not be construed as all-inclusive; rather they should be considered an overview of the knowledge and skill sets that an individual should possess. Note that each checklist is dynamic in the sense that it will change over time, adapting to legislation, legal issues, and other factors that impact township government and the responsibilities of the elected official.

MTA offers programming that provides township officials with a practical, effective and convenient learning experience, focusing on the fundamental knowledge and understanding needed to successfully operate and lead a township throughout all phases of their career as an elected leader. Our credentialing program—the Township Governance Academy—provides a comprehensive series of courses and electives that tie together learning and practical application to bring township governance to a whole new level of effectiveness (see inside back cover).

The core competencies address two goals: (1) to create a more-informed, better-educated cadre of township officials who are more confident and competent in carrying out their roles and responsibilities as leaders in their communities; and (2) to generate greater effectiveness on the part of local government. We think it’s a winning combination—especially since townships are now home to half of all Michigan residents. As a township official, you have an important role to fill, and we’re here to help.

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Township Supervisor

(1) Township Government Operations

- Demonstrates knowledge about township (general law or charter) government responsibilities, functions and powers
- Identifies the major functions of each branch of government—local, state and federal—along with their relationship to one another
- Understands the statutory duties and responsibilities of the office of township supervisor
- Aware of the roles and responsibilities of other elected and appointed offices in the township
- Demonstrates knowledge of the various committees, boards and commissions serving the township, including their roles and responsibilities
- Understands how township policies and procedures are set
- Demonstrates knowledge of how ordinances are lawfully adopted and legally enforced

(2) Interpersonal Skills

- Communicates effectively
- Listens attentively
- Works effectively with individuals, departments and committees to achieve desired outcomes
- Possesses knowledge of what constitutes ethical behavior
- Manages adversity and hostility effectively

(3) Leadership Abilities

- Possesses vision, especially relative to the township's needs or potential
- Leads effective board meetings and is knowledgeable about parliamentary procedure
- Possesses effective policy-making skills and decision-making skills
- Utilizes consensus-building techniques
- Possesses persuasive/influential abilities
- Motivates others to achieve desired outcomes
- Utilizes public relations skills to position the township positively

(4) Management Skills

- Makes decisions consistent with desired outcomes
- Utilizes strategic planning to attain objectives
- Develops and oversees the budget
- Understands purchasing policies and the bid process
- Possesses knowledge of personnel administration
- Understands the collective bargaining process, including legal framework (only applicable to some townships)
- Negotiates issues and contracts effectively

(5) Township Issues

- Possesses knowledge about current issues affecting townships
- Aware of legal matters that could impact the township
- Understands the elements of risk management
- Aware of financial matters affecting the township, including revenue sources
- Possesses knowledge about land use
- Understands the planning and zoning process
- Possesses knowledge of township services and their policy implications



Township Clerk

(1) Township Government Operations

- Demonstrates knowledge about township (general law or charter) government responsibilities, functions and powers
- Identifies the major functions of each branch of government—local, state and federal—along with their relationship to one another
- Understands the statutory duties and responsibilities of the office of township clerk
- Aware of the roles and responsibilities of other elected and appointed offices in the township
- Demonstrates knowledge of the various committees, boards and commissions serving the township, including their roles and responsibilities
- Understands how township policies and procedures are set
- Demonstrates knowledge of how ordinances are lawfully adopted and legally enforced

(2) Interpersonal Skills

- Communicates effectively
- Listens attentively
- Works effectively with individuals, departments and committees to achieve desired outcomes
- Possesses knowledge of what constitutes ethical behavior
- Manages adversity and hostility effectively
- Delegates tasks appropriately

(3) Leadership Abilities

- Possesses vision, especially relative to the township's needs or potential
- Understands how to conduct effective board meetings and is knowledgeable about parliamentary procedure
- Possesses effective policy-making skills and decision-making skills
- Utilizes consensus-building techniques
- Possesses persuasive/influential abilities
- Motivates others to achieve desired outcomes
- Utilizes public relations skills to position the township positively

(4) Administrative Skills

- Possesses knowledge of the communication/noticing needs of the township and devises strategies to assemble and disseminate information to relevant audiences
- Understands the township budget and the clerk's role in monitoring budget
- Aware of purchasing policies and the bid process
- Demonstrates knowledge of uniform chart of accounts and township accounting practices
- Possesses understanding of personnel administration and human resources matters
- Has ability to transcribe minutes of the proceedings of each township board meeting in an accurate and proper manner
- Understands maintenance of township records, books and papers in accordance with record retention and disposal guidelines
- Possesses knowledge of elections and clerk's role in overseeing the elections process

(5) Township Issues

- Possesses knowledge about current issues affecting townships
- Aware of legal matters that could impact the township
- Understands the elements of risk management
- Aware of financial matters affecting the township, including revenue sources
- Possesses knowledge about land use
- Understands the planning and zoning process
- Possesses knowledge of township services and their policy implications



Township Treasurer

(1) Township Government Operations

- Demonstrates knowledge about township (general law or charter) government responsibilities, functions and powers
- Identifies the major functions of each branch of government—local, state and federal—along with their relationship to one another
- Understands the statutory duties and responsibilities of the office of township treasurer
- Aware of the roles and responsibilities of other elected and appointed offices in the township
- Demonstrates knowledge of the various committees, boards and commissions serving the township, including their roles and responsibilities
- Understands how township policies and procedures are set
- Demonstrates knowledge of how ordinances are lawfully adopted and legally enforced

(2) Interpersonal Skills

- Communicates effectively
- Listens attentively
- Works effectively with individuals, departments and committees to achieve desired outcomes
- Establishes appropriate contacts with banks, mortgage companies, insurance and investment firms
- Possesses knowledge of what constitutes ethical behavior
- Manages adversity and hostility effectively
- Delegates tasks appropriately

(3) Leadership Abilities

- Possesses vision, especially relative to the township's needs or potential
- Understands how to conduct effective board meetings and is knowledgeable about parliamentary procedure
- Possesses effective policy-making skills and decision-making skills
- Utilizes consensus-building techniques
- Possesses persuasive/influential abilities
- Motivates others to achieve desired outcomes
- Utilizes public relations skills to position the township positively

(4) Administrative Skills

- Demonstrates knowledge of uniform chart of accounts, generally accepted accounting practices and proper internal controls
- Implements sound cash management procedures and proper handling of funds, including knowledge of investment instruments and legal limitations on investments
- Understands elements of investment risks
- Aware of what constitutes lawful township expenditures
- Has ability to generate required financial reports and statements, which are accurate and timely
- Understands the audit process
- Possesses knowledge of the township budget and can project reasonable cash flows on an annual basis
- Understands purchasing policies and the bid process
- Demonstrates knowledge of general property tax administration process, including collection and distribution of tax revenues
- Understands procedures for collecting personal property taxes

(5) Township Issues

- Possesses knowledge about current issues affecting townships
- Aware of legal matters that could impact the township
- Understands the elements of risk management
- Aware of financial matters affecting the township, including revenue sources
- Possesses knowledge about land use
- Understands the planning and zoning process
- Possesses knowledge of township services and their policy implications



Township Trustee

(1) Township Government Operations

- Demonstrates knowledge about township (general law or charter) government responsibilities, functions and powers
- Identifies the major functions of each branch of government—local, state and federal—along with their relationship to one another
- Understands the duties and responsibilities of the office of township trustee
- Aware of the roles and responsibilities of other elected and appointed offices in the township
- Demonstrates knowledge of the various committees, boards and commissions serving the township, including their roles and responsibilities
- Understands how township policies and procedures are set
- Demonstrates knowledge of how ordinances are lawfully adopted and legally enforced

(2) Interpersonal Skills

- Communicates effectively
- Listens attentively
- Works effectively with individuals, departments and committees to achieve desired outcomes
- Possesses knowledge of what constitutes ethical behavior
- Demonstrates behavior that results in public trust
- Manages adversity and hostility effectively

(3) Leadership Abilities


- Possesses vision, especially relative to the township's needs or potential
- Understands how to be an active participant in board meetings and is knowledgeable about parliamentary procedure
- Possesses effective policy-making skills and decision-making skills
- Utilizes consensus-building techniques
- Possesses persuasive/influential abilities
- Motivates others to achieve desired outcomes
- Utilizes public relations skills to position the township positively

(4) Policymaking Skills

- Understands how to objectively monitor administrative actions for compliance with existing policy and law, and to ensure that policies and practices serve the public well
- Knows how to critically examine proposals to evaluate how the proposed policies and practices could affect the township
- Creates effective systems for establishing rapport with constituents, ensuring that voters' needs are brought to the attention of the township board
- Understands how to constructively participate in, or lead, committees, including setting objectives and goals, conducting productive meetings, and providing accurate reports
- Utilizes effective research techniques to become more knowledgeable about matters that come before the township board and/or committees
- Understands the budget process, financial statements and how to use fiduciary responsibilities to manage the township's affairs in the best interests of the public
- Understands purchasing policies and the bid process
- Possesses knowledge of contracts, including intergovernmental agreements

(5) Township Issues

- Possesses knowledge about current issues affecting townships
- Aware of legal matters that could impact the township
- Understands the elements of risk management
- Aware of financial matters affecting the township, including revenue sources
- Possesses knowledge about land use
- Understands the planning and zoning process
- Possesses knowledge of township services and their policy implications



The Michigan Townships Association promotes the interests of 1,240 townships by fostering strong, vibrant communities; advocating legislation to meet 21st century challenges; developing knowledgeable township officials and enthusiastic supporters of township government; and encouraging ethical practices of elected officials who uphold the traditions and unique characteristics of township government and the values of the people of Michigan.